II. *A Letter from the* Eaſt Indies, *of Mr* John Marſhal *to Dr* Coga, *giving an account of the Religion, Rites, Notions, Cuſtoms, Manners of the Heathen Prieſts commonly called* Bramines. *Communicated by the Reverend Mr* Abraham de la Pryme.

Worthy Sir,

THe laſt time that I had the happineſs to to be in your good Company, and to partake of thoſe favours and bleſſings that your Goodneſs was pleaſed liberally to beſtow upon me and our Companions, at our departure, and as it were exile from our native Land, does ſo loudly call out for ſome recompence or other at our hands, that I cannot without the greateſt Ingratitude imaginable, let ſlip this (tho ſudden) opportunity of writing unto you, and preſenting of you at this time with what I underſtand you more value than all the Riches of the Eaſt; to wit, a few Specimens of the Knowledge of thoſe people whom we ſtile Barbarians, Heathens and Idolaters, which I have read in their own Books, and gather'd from the mouths of thoſe that have been the greateſt Speakers and Preachers amongſt them. I have always had a profound Veneration for the Dictates of Nature, and the univerſal Traditions of Nations, for hereby are Infinite things to be learned, for the eſtabliſhing of our Glorious Religion againſt Atheiſts, and the more eaſie propagation of the ſame amongſt Infidels and Heathens.

Upon what account or grounds it is that ſome Travellers have ſtil'd theſe people Polytheiſts, or Atheiſts, I cannot tell; or whether there be any ſuch people at all in the World, except ſome of the baſe common ſort in all Nations, I much queſtion. It is very obſervable here, that their Prieſts, or *Braminies*, and Holy men, whom they call *Jagees*, when they have occaſion to write any thing they always put a figure of one in the firſt place, to ſhew, as they ſay, that they acknowledge but one God, whom they ſay is *Burme*, that is, Immaterial. When they preach to the people, and inſtruct them, which is commonly every Feaſt-day, full Moon, or the time of an Eclipſe of either Luminary, they tell the common people much of God, Heaven and Hell, but very Imperfectly, Obſcurely and Myſtically. They ſay that when God thought of making the World, he made it in a minute.

They account this World the Body of God, for all that they ſay he's Immaterial; and ſay that the Higheſt Heavens are his Head, the Fire his Mouth, the Air his Breath and Breaſt, the Water his Seed, and the Earth and the foundations thereof his Legs and Feet. But aſſert in general that God is the life of every thing, yet is the thing neither greater nor leſs for him.

They hold that God dwelt in a Vacuity before that he created the World, and that as he dwelt in that Vacuity he created ſeveral Beings out of himſelf, the firſt were Angels, the ſecond Souls, the third Spirits, all differing in degrees of Purity, the firſt being more pure than the ſecond, and the ſecond than the third. The Angels, they ſay, neither act Good nor Evil, the Souls either Good or Evil, but the Spirits, or *Dewta's*, as they call them, act ſcarce any thing but Evil.

They have a good Opinion of the Angels, and think their ſtate mighty happy, hoping that when they dye they ſhall be made partakers of the ſame bliſs and pleaſure.

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They believe that every thing that hath Life hath a Soul, but eſpecially Man; and they accordingly affirm, that as theſe Souls behaved themſelves in their pre-exiſtent ſtate, ſo are their Actions in this World either good or bad, by a ſort of fatal Neceſſity, which is very hard to conquer, or to overcome. Hence it is, ſay they, that there are ſo many different Humours and Diſpoſitions of men, for their Souls, before their entrance into their Bodies, being tainted with different Affections, cauſes the like Differences in the parties, whoſe Bodies are their Vehicles. So that if a man happen to have a ſudden or unfortunate Death, they immediately aſcribe the ſame to the party's own wickedneſs, or the bad life that his Soul led before that it enter'd into his Body. For, ſay they, the afore-acted Evil that his Soul did in its other Life, brought theſe accidents upon him, by getting the upper hand of him, and by being too powerful and ſtrong. And thoſe that dye thus, they believe that their Souls turn immediately into Devils. They maintain *Pythagoras*'s Tranſmigration, or *Metempſycoſis*, but in a groſſer ſenſe than he did. For they believe that mens Souls, that have not lived ſo well as they ought, go as ſoon as the Body dyes not only into Birds and Beaſts, but even into the baſeſt Reptiles, Inſects and Plants, where they ſuffer a ſtrong ſort of purgation, to expiate their former Crimes: But as for the Souls of the *Jogees*, or *Fuche's*, that is, of Religious Men and Saints, they fancy that they go and inhabit with the good *Dewta's*, or Angels, amongſt the Stars.

As for the Spirits, or Inferiour Angels, they believe that they are very evil, and have a hand in all Wickedneſſes, Murders, Wars, Storms, and Tempeſts; ſo that when they ſolemnize the Funerals of thoſe that are dead, they always preſent Diſhes of Meat, as Offerings unto thoſe Spirits, and ſometimes Sacrifice unto

them, that they may not hurt the Souls of the Dead.

As they acknowledge the Being of a mighty God, ſo they hold that he created the World, and every thing therein. They believe that there are almoſt infinite number of Worlds, and that God has oftentimes Annihilated and Re-Created the ſame. But how he came firſt to Create the World and Mankind, they relate to have been thus—Once on a time (ſay they) as he was ſet in Eternity, it came into his mind to make ſomething, and immediately no ſooner had he thought the ſame, but that the ſame minute was a perfect beautiful Woman preſent immediately before him, which he called *Adea Suktee*, that is, the firſt Woman: Then this figure put into his mind the figure of a Man; which he had no ſooner conceived in his mind, but that he alſo ſtarted up, and repreſented himſelf before him; this he called *Manapuiſe*, that is, the firſt Man; then upon a reflection of theſe things, he reſolv'd further to create ſeveral places for them to abide in, and accordingly aſſuming a ſubtil body, he breathed in a minute the whole Univerſe, and every thing therein, from the leaſt to the greateſt.

They conſtantly believe that the Univerſe cannot poſſibly laſt longer than 71 *Joog's*, which is a meaſure of time with them, and is .... years. Which when it is come, God does not only annihilate the whole Univerſe, but even every thing elſe, as well Angels, Souls, and Spirits, as Inferiour Creatures; and then he remains in the ſame ſtate that he was in before the Creation; But ſay, that after he has a while reſpired thus, he breathes again, and every thing is Created afreſh, as well Angels and Souls, as all other things; but as for the Spirits, they are no more thought of. Yet for all this, after 71 *Joogs* more all is Annihilated again. How many *Joogs* are paſt ſince the World was laſt Created they cannot certainly tell; only 'tis obſervable

ſervable that in an Almanack of theirs, written in the *Sanſcript* Language in 1670, they make the World then 3892771 years old from its laſt Creation.

The *Bramines* of *Perſia* tell certain long ſtories of a great Gyant that was led into a moſt delicate Garden, which upon certain conditions ſhould be his own for ever. But one evening in a cool ſhade, one of the Wicked *Dewta's*, or Spirits, came to him, and tempted him with vaſt ſumms of Gold, and all the moſt precious Jewels that can be imagined; but he courageouſly withſtood that temptation, as not knowing what value or uſe they were of: But at length this wicked *Dewta* brought to him a fair Woman, who ſo charm'd him, that for her ſake he moſt willingly broke all his Conditions, and thereupon was turned out.

They tell a great many ſtories, abſurd and ridiculous enough, of the firſt ages of this preſent World, which would be too tedious here to take notice of; only I ſhall here give you out of one of their own Books what they tell us of a great Flood that formerly happened. They ſay, that about 21000 years ago the Sea overwhelmed and drowned the whole Earth, except one great Hill, far to the Northwards, called *Bindd*, and that there fled thither only one woman and ſeven men, the names of whom were, *Dehoolah*, *Sunnuk*, *Sunnaud*, *Trilleek*, *Sannotah*, *Cuppyloſhaw*, *Suraſchah* and *Burroopung*; theſe, underſtanding out of their Books that ſuch a Flood would come, and was then actually coming, prepar'd againſt the ſame, and repaired thither; to which place alſo went two of all ſort of Creatures, Herbs, Trees, and Graſſes, and of every thing that had life, to the number in all of 1800000 living Souls. This Flood (ſay they) laſted 120 years, 5 months and 5 days: After which time all thoſe Creatures that were thus preſerved, deſcended down again and repleniſhed the Earth: But as for the 7 men and woman, only one

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of them came down with her, and dwelt at the foot of the Mountain, the other ſix turned *Fuchee's*, or Holy Men, and ſpent there the remainder of their days.

They hold in general the *Ptolomaic* Syſtem of the Univerſe, and ſay that there are 8 or 9 Heavens, counting the Air and Earth, every one exceeding another in Beauty and Glory.

Their Religion conſiſts of nothing that I could ever ſee or learn, but the leading of a Pure Life, the Waſhing away of their Sins in the River *Ganges*, their muttering over of diverſe Prayets, and their doing of ſtrange and incredible Penances.

They ſay, that God is ſuch a one, that whoſoever ſeeks him, let it be after what manner he pleaſes, whether by thinking that the Sun is he, or the Moon, or the like, if they do it but ſincerely and honeſtly, with a right affected heart, they ſhall be received of him.

They report, that on a time a *Muſſulman* ſeeing a *Hindoo*, or Pagan Prieſt, in Heaven, he ask'd God how that Infidel came to have admittance thither; whom *Mahomet* ſo often calls by the name of Bitter Roots? To whom God anſwer'd, What if a Bitter Root bring forth ſweeter Fruit than any of you, why ſhould I not receive it? Upon which the *Muſſulman* had no more to ſay.

They hold, that ſuch as ſuffer not their minds to wander after the luſts of the world are perfect *Jogees*, or Saints, and hold that God is always preſent with them in all their actions.

It is to be found in many of their Books, that there was a time, a good while ago, in which God took upon him the ſhape of a Man, and ſpent many years in reforming the world, and giving better rules to walk by than had been before: but at length having left them, they ſoon forgot him and his Rules, and return'd to their former courſes; upon which he told them that he

he would leave them to their ways, and never undertake any ſuch thing again.

The Religious at ſome certain ſeaſons of the year come unto the River *Ganges* (which they call the Holy River) in vaſt multitudes, even from many parts of *Tartary*, to waſh away their ſins, and make expiation for their faults.

This *Ganges* is a delicate fine River, chiefly for the ſake of its moſt ſweet, pure and clear Waters, which have got it the greateſt eſteem of any River in the Eaſt. I have oftentimes ſail'd many miles up it, and have found it in ſome places not to be above a mile broad, in others not half ſo much, and in one or two places not above one eighth of a mile. In *April*, when the Water is at the loweſt, it is almoſt dry in many places; but when it is at the higheſt, which is commonly about the middle of *September*, it is very deep, and many miles broad.

When the people are here gather'd together, they have a great many ſtrange Cuſtoms and Ceremonies, and pay a kind of Divine Honour and Worſhip to the River, too long and tedious here to mention. The *Hindoo's* and *Bramines* preach then every day to the people, teaching them their Duties, and ordering them to ſay ſuch and ſuch Prayers; but above all things to be Charitable to the poor and needy.

It is reported, that upon the Hills by *Caſmere* there are men that live ſome hundreds of years, and can hold their breaths, and lye in Trances for ſeveral years together, if they be but kept warm; and that every year ſome of them come down unto the people at *Ganges*, and do many great Cures; for whom they have ſuch a veneration, that they frequently drink the Water they waſh their ſweaty Feet in.

The Penances and Auſterities that they undergo are almoſt incredible; moſt of them through their continual

nual Faſtings, and lying upon the parching hot Sand in the heat of the Sun, are ſo lean, dry'd and wither'd, that they look like Skeletons or Shadows, and one can ſcarce perceive them to breathe, or feel their Pulſe beat.

When any great man dves amongſt them, but eſpecially any of their *Jogee's*, or Saints, they make great preparations for their Funeral; the Corpſe is laid on its belly, and Salt and Rice laid round about it at every corner on the ground. Then the neareſt Relations to the party deceaſed carry a pot of Water on their ſhoulders ſeveral times about the Funeral Pile, when they burn them, then breaking it in pieces, ſpills the Water. Which Ceremony being ended, the Pile is fired, and then all the Relations begin to howl, and embrace one another, then waſhing themſelves in ſome neighbouring River, they depart every one to his home; and as for the remaining Aſhes, if he be rich they gather them up, and caſt them into the *Ganges* or the Sea.

Sometimes it happens that the Wife of the deceaſed party, if ſhe have no Children, and be old, or ill to live in the world, will burn herſelf with the dead body; but this happens very ſeldom. It is ſaid, that in ſuch caſes the *Bramines* give the woman a ſtupifying Liquor, which by the time that they are in the fire makes them ſenceleſs of any pain.

To know into what Body the Soul of the Deceaſed is tranſmigrated they do thus; they ſtrew the Aſhes of the dead upon the place where he was firſt laid after his death, and handfuls of odoriferous Flowers about the ſame, and returning again in 44 hours, they judge by ſome pretended impreſſion or other in the Aſhes, into what body it is gone: if the foot of an Horſe, or Dog, or Ox, or ſuch like appear, then they certainly give out that it is gone into ſuch like Creatures; but if nothing appear, then they think it is certainly gone to the Starry Regions.

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As for their Learning and Knowledge it is but little; they have indeed ſeveral Books writ in diverſe Languages, but they contain nothing but a great deal of ſtuff and cant about their Worſhip, Rites and Ceremonies.

They are ignorant of all parts of the World but their own; they wonder much at us, that will take ſo much care and pains, and run thro ſo many dangers both by Sea and Land, only, as they ſay, to uphold and nouriſh Pride and Luxury. For, ſay they, every Country in the whole world is ſufficiently endow'd by Nature with every thing that is neceſſary for the life of Man, and that therefore it is madneſs to ſeek for, or deſire, that which is needleſs and unneceſſary.

The laſt time that I was at *Moduſſerpore* in *Indoſtan*, I had a great deal of talk with a *Bramine* ſomewhat more learned than any of the reſt, his name was *Ramnaunt*; he told me a great many Secrets in Phyſick, and told me many Traditions and Stories. He ſays, that if you bury a piece of Money for ſome conſiderable time in the mouth of a live Frog, and then dig it up again at midnight, that this piece of Money, to whomſoever you give or pay it, will always return to you again.

He ſays, that if the little Worm in the Wood *Lukerakera* be cut in two, and the one part ſtirs and the other not, if the ſtirring part be bruiſed, and given with half a Beetle to a Man, the other half to a Woman, this Charm will keep them from ever lying abſent one from the other.

They have Books full of the like abſurdities, and Cabaliſtick Complication of Figures; as for example, if you write theſe following Numbers, 28, 35, 2, 7.——6, 3, 32, 31—34, 29, 8, 1,—4, 5, 30, 33. in the ſquares of a ſquare figure, and your Enemies name under it, and wear it always about you, your Enemy ſhall never be able to hurt you.

So if you write the following figures in the like manner upon the Left hand, 2, 9, 2, 7—6, 3, 6, 5,—8, 3, 8, 1——4, 5, 4, 7—with Turmeric, and waſh the ſame off with fair Water of *Ganges*, and drink it, it will cure all manner of Venemous Bitings.

Multitudes of ſuch like ridiculous fancies they have; all which they ſeem to have borrowed from the *Cabala* of the *Saracens*, which is full of ſuch like.

I lately heard a *Bramine* ſay, that if ſome of the Pieces or knots of the Cloath (in which a Woman hath been burned with her Husband) be ſaved, and made up in the form of a Wick, and fitted for a Lamp, and lighted, and ſet in a dead Womans Skull, that it would make the dead party appear. This he ſaid he had done, but I did not believe him.

When they have any mad men amongſt them, they take them and put them into a cloſe Room, juſt big enough to hold them, and almoſt ſmoke them to death with Musk and cold Smells, which ſoon brings their brains into their right temperature, and ſo recovers them, *&c.*

There happened two things in our Voyage hither which I thought very obſervable, tho perhaps they may not be unknown to you—The firſt was, that all our Tornadoes brought much Rain with a ſtink; and if the Sea-men did but lay their Cloaths by for 24 hours, they became all full of little Maggots. The ſecond is, When we came out of *Europe* we took in ſome Water at *St Jago's*, and when we were almoſt at our Journeys end, our Cooper going with a Candle to open one of the Casks, he had no ſooner done it, but the Water immediately took fire, and burnt his Face, Hands and Fingers; but he ſuddenly turning about quench'd the ſame, by ſetting his Britch on it. It ſtunk pretty much alſo at the ſame time, but afterwards came to its native ſweetneſs, *&c.* *I am yours*, &c.

Jo. Marſhal.